Statement of
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Intergovernmental Relations and the Census
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak today about NSF's participation in the Presidential Electronic Government (e-Gov) initiatives. I am Dr. George Strawn, Chief Information Officer of the National Science Foundation, a position I have held for the last 18 months. Prior to that and since 1991, I have held various positions in NSF's Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering. Prior to 1991, I was a computer science faculty member and department chair, and a computation center director at Iowa State University.

Introduction

I am particularly pleased to have this opportunity because the e-Gov initiatives have been enabled by the emergence of the Internet, for which the Federal government provided the definitive research and development since the mid 1960s: first by the Department of Defense, then by NSF and other agencies. NSF supported the development of an Internet infrastructure for higher education and subsequently took the lead in commercializing and privatizing the Internet so it could become, over the last 10 years, a global force to reshape many aspects of society, including the Federal government.

As well as being a major provider of IT research support, NSF has worked hard to be a leader in the use of information technology. Our "Fastlane" system developed in the 1990s has enabled us to receive research and education project proposals over the Internet, and we are now also performing many of our "back-office" proposal review and award-making activities electronically as well. Recently, we were gratified to receive the President's Quality Award for our Fastlane system and its innovative electronic capabilities to solicit, receive, review, select, award, manage, and report results on public research and education investments. We were also gratified to receive "the green light" for e-government from the Administration and to receive an "A-" this year from this Committee for our work under the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) to secure the NSF information and IT resources.

The Presidential Initiatives

As Karen Evans has mentioned, there are 24 initiatives divided into four portfolios, and the E-Authentication initiative that supports all of the other 24. While NSF participates

in many of these initiatives, I would like to highlight our participation in the Grants.gov project since that is our core line of business.

Grants.gov

NSF is one of 11 Grants.gov partner agencies committing resources – both funding and staff -- to the success of this initiative. Since the initiative's inception, we have worked productively with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Grants.gov managing partner, and the other agencies that are represented on the Grants.gov Executive Board. These partner agencies are responsible for the annual awarding of the majority of Federal grants, both in terms of transactions and dollars, . These assistance funds, over $360 billion annually, support the activities of universities, state and local governments, and other public and private non-profit groups.

NSF was a natural partner for this initiative, and we have been able to leverage our experiences with our FastLane system to provide an experience base for the interagency Grants.gov efforts to build upon. For example, our FastLane system processed more than 99 percent of all proposals electronically in FY 2003 (over 40,000), and almost 200,000 electronic reviews, helping NSF achieve its goal of processing 70 percent of proposals within six months. We have been pleased to contribute our experiences and lessons learned to this important Government-wide initiative to enable more effective stewardship of the taxpayer's resources by grant-making agencies.

The vision for Grants.gov is to provide a simple, unified source to electronically *find* and *apply* for grants opportunities – formula, block and discretionary grants-from over 900 grant programs in 26 Federal grant-making agencies.

Find establishes Grants.Gov as the central government-wide location for posting brief information on all funding opportunities, allowing anyone to go to one central site to identify all government-sponsored funding opportunities. *Apply* provides the capability to electronically submit a grant application through Grants.gov to the sponsoring agency.

NSF currently posts all synopses of our funding opportunities on the Grants.gov site and is working with Grants.gov to use the Apply functions by the end of FY 2004. In addition, NSF is working with the e-Authentication project, Grants.gov, FirstGov, and the Department of Agriculture to pilot the capability to authenticate grant applicants from a variety of trusted sources, including FastLane, thus reducing administrative burden on the grantee and funding agencies.

NSF is a leading agency in the effort to define a set of "Research and Related data elements and associated forms", along with the National Institutes of Health, Department of Energy, and others.   This Research and Related data set, delivered just last week to Grants.gov, will be used across all the research agencies to provide applicants with a standard set of data requirements for the application process.   In recognition of its importance for the Grants.gov initiative, NSF has contributed significant staff time to this effort.

Grants Management Task Force

Last week OMB announced five new task forces focusing on government "lines of business" that further support the President's Management Agenda. NSF has been named a co-managing partner, with the Department of Education, on the Grants Management task force. This new interagency effort will reduce the cost of grant management and improve services to citizens by identifying potential business functions that can be shared across agencies.

Conclusion

Through Grants.gov and the new interagency task force on grants management, the Federal government is making significant progress in meeting the requirements in Public Law 106-107, and establishing an interagency process to streamline and simplify Federal financial assistance procedures for non-Federal entities. NSF is also involved in numerous other eGov initiatives in areas that affect all Federal entities. In addition to its role on Grants.gov, NSF is an early adopter of eTravel services, and actively engaged in the Enterprise Human Resources Integration (EHRI), and eLearning initiatives. In addition, NSF is retiring its legacy payroll and personnel systems and migrating to a Government-wide Payroll/Personnel system in FY 2004 as part of the ePayroll initiative. With the comprehensive range of Presidential E-government initiatives, the Federal Enterprise Architecture, and other coordinated efforts, we are making good progress towards better serving our citizens while at the same time controlling costs. Our challenge is to continue to implement these important initiatives with a careful focus on Enterprise-level integration so that the resulting products and capabilities can be optimized within both Agency-specific environments as well as at the Government-wide level.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.